Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

storing a plurality of bit masks, said bit masks respectively corresponding to rules that each specify a corresponding routing action;

examining a packet to determine if the packet contains extensible markup language (XML)-related content;

if ~~any~~ XML-related content is determined to be ~~present~~contained in said packet, matching that XML-related content to ~~a~~ specific ones of said rules that ~~specifies~~ each specify a corresponding routing action to ~~apply to~~perform on said packet ~~to balance load~~; and

~~undertaking~~ using specific ones of said stored bit masks that respectively correspond to said matching specific rules to determine a ~~said~~ particular routing action to perform on the packet ~~as specified by the matching rule~~.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein ~~undertaking~~said determine said particular routing action includes determining which server to forward the packet.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said examining the packet includes at least one of examining a header of the packet and examining a body of the packet.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said examining the packet includes reading the packet to determine if any at least one of an XML tag and an XML attribute is present therein.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said examining the packet includes examining a request to determine if the request includes an indication of an XML representation of a resource being requested.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said examining the packet includes examining a hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) packet.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6 wherein said examining the HTTP packet includes examining a simple object access protocol (SOAP) message in the HTTP packet to determine if the SOAP message encapsulates XML-related content.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising decrypting the packet prior to examining the packet.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said examining the packet includes examining XML root and node elements of the packet to identify content that can be matched to ~~at least~~said specific ones of said rules.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1~~, further comprising defining~~ wherein said specific rules form a plurality of simple rules that can be related to one another to form a complex rule, wherein at least one of the simple rules is specific to XML-related content.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said ~~undertaking the routing action on said packet as specified by the matching rule~~particular routing action includes at least one of performing a delayed binding operation and buffering packets until information for load balancing is received, load balancing multiple XML applications, differentiating service of packets based on their XML-related content, and prioritizing transactions based on XML-related content of packets.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

examining the packet to identify non-XML-related content;

matching the non-XML-related content to corresponding other ones of said rules; and

determining the particular routing action to undertake based on the rules corresponding to the XML-related content and to the non-XML-related content.

13. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

examining a packet to identify ~~indicia present therein that is associated with a structured document format~~extensible markup language (XML)-related content present in said packet;

comparing ~~data from the indicia~~said identified XML-related content present in said packet with a set of rules to identify ~~at least one~~specific ones of the rules that ~~matches that data~~match said XML-related content, said rules in said set each specifying a routing action to ~~apply to~~perform on said packet ~~to balance load~~; and

~~undertaking~~ using specific ones of bit masks that respectively correspond to said matching specific rules to determine a ~~said~~ particular routing action to perform on the packet ~~as specified by said at least one rule that matches the data~~.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~14~~ 13 wherein said examining the packet to identify ~~indicia~~ XML-related content includes examining at least one of header and body portions of the packet to locate either or both an XML tag and an XML attribute.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said comparing the ~~data from the indicia~~XML-related content with the set of rules includes at least one of comparing a string in either or both the XML tag and XML attribute, or comparing a string marked by either or both the XML tag and XML attribute, with the set of rules.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising ~~defining~~ storing a set of commands that specify a manner in which the ~~structured document format~~packet is to be examined for said XML-related content.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising:

~~defining~~ storing a plurality of first rules of the set, at least some of which are associated with ~~the structured document format~~XML-related content and at least some of which are not associated ~~with the structured document format~~ XML-related content;

~~defining~~ storing a plurality of second rules of the set, at least some of which are made up of several said first rules; and

specifying for each of said second rules a respective routing action to undertake ~~for each of the second rules~~, if content of packets match the second rules.

19. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture, comprising:

a storage medium having instructions stored thereon that are executable by a processor to:

examine a packet to identify ~~indicia present therein that is associated with a structured document format~~ extensible markup language (XML)-related content present in said packet;

compare ~~data from the indicia~~ said identified XML-related content present in said packet with a set of rules to identify ~~at least one~~specific ones of the rules that ~~matches that data~~ match said XML-related content, said rules in said set each specifying a routing action to ~~apply to~~perform on said packet ~~to balance load~~; and

~~undertake~~ use specific ones of bit masks that respectively correspond to said matching specific rules to determine a ~~said~~ particular routing action to perform on the packet ~~as specified by said at least one rule that matches the data~~.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 19 wherein the storage medium further includes instructions stored thereon that are executable by said processor to:

~~specify~~ identify a plurality of first rules of the set, at least some of which are associated with ~~the structured document format in the form of XML~~ XML-related content and at least some of which are not associated with XML-related content;

~~specify~~ identify a plurality of second rules of the set, at least some of which are made up of several said first rules; and

specify for each of the second rules a respective routing action to undertake ~~for each of the second rules~~, if content of packets match the second rules.

22. (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:

a means for storing a plurality of bit masks, said bit masks respectively corresponding to rules that each specify a corresponding routing action;

a means for examining a packet to determine if the packet contains extensible markup language (XML)-related content;

a means for matching ~~that~~ XML-related content determined to be contained in said packet to ~~a~~ specific ones of said rules that each specify ~~specifies~~ a corresponding routing action to ~~apply to~~perform on said packet ~~for balancing load, if any XML-related content is determined to be present~~; and

a means for ~~undertaking~~ using specific ones of said stored bit masks that respectively correspond to said matching specific rules to determine a ~~said~~ particular routing action to perform on the packet ~~as specified by the matching rule~~.

23. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 22 wherein the means for examining the packet ~~includes~~ performs at least one of ~~a means for~~ examining a header of the packet and ~~a means for~~ examining a body of the packet~~, such means for examining the header and body of the packet including at least one of a means for reading the packet~~ to determine if ~~any~~ at least one of an XML tag and an XML attribute is present therein.

24. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 22, further comprising a means for decrypting the packet if the packet includes encrypted said XML-related content.

25. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 22, further comprising:

means for storing ~~plural ones of said rules~~said rules that each ~~respectively specifying~~specify a ~~different~~ corresponding routing action to ~~apply to~~perform on said packet.

26. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 22~~, further comprising~~ wherein:

~~a~~ said means for examining further examines the packet to identify non-XML-related content;

~~a~~ said means for matching matches the identified non-XML-related content to corresponding other ones of said rules; and

~~a~~ said means for using ~~determining~~ determines the particular routing action ~~to undertake~~ based on the specific matching rules corresponding to the XML-related content and on said other rules corresponding to the non-XML-related content.

27. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 22 wherein said ~~means for undertaking the routing action on the packet as specified by the matching rule~~ particular routing action includes at least one of:

~~a means for~~ performing a delayed binding operation;

~~a means for~~ load balancing multiple XML applications;

~~a means for~~ differentiating service of packets based on their XML-related content; and

~~a means for~~ prioritizing transactions based on XML-related content of packets.

28. (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a processor;

a first element under control of the processor to examine a packet to determine if the packet contains extensible markup language (XML)-related content;

a second element under control by the processor to match ~~that~~ XML-related content determined to be contained in said packet to ~~a~~ specific ones of a set of rules, ~~which specifies~~ said rules in said set each specifying a routing action to ~~apply to~~perform on said packet ~~to balance load, if any XML-related content is determined to be present~~; and

a third element under control by the processor to ~~undertake~~ use specific ones of bit masks that respectively correspond to said matching specific rules to determine a ~~said~~ particular routing action to perform on the packet ~~as specified by the matching rule~~.

29. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, further comprising a decryption device to decrypt ~~encrypted~~ said XML-related content, which was encrypted, ~~of~~ contained in the packet.

30. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, further comprising a data structure accessible by the processor to store ~~plural ones of said rules~~said specific rules that each specify a routing action ~~to undertake~~ if ~~certain~~ said XML-related content is ~~present~~ contained in ~~packets~~said packet.

31. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the data structure further stores rules, from said set, that are associated with non-XML-related content, the first element being capable to examine the packet for the non-XML-related content, the second element being capable to match the non-XML-related content of the packet to at least one corresponding rule associated with non-XML-related content, the third element being capable to determine the particular routing action ~~to undertake~~ based on an evaluation ~~of a combination of~~bit masks that correspond to rules ~~pertaining to~~ associated with XML-related content and associated with non-XML-related content that are present in the packet.